

State of Illinois

Department of Employment Security



Marketing Your Job Skills



IDES
ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF
EMPLOYMENT SECURITY

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Introduction



You want work, and you feel that somewhere an employer has precisely the position you want - one that fully utilizes your knowledge, skills and interests, and provides challenge and opportunities for advancement. To find that position, you need to carry out a well-planned work search. You have a product to sell – your knowledge, skills, experience and enthusiasm. What you need to know is how to market them most effectively.

Whether you are just out of school and ready to start your career, or looking for a new position after 20 years of work experience, the techniques presented in this pamphlet may help you. It offers suggestions on:

- Where you can find out more about the kinds of positions you are qualified to hold
- How to present your skills and experience in a resume that will convince an employer that you are worth interviewing
- How to write a letter of application that attracts an employer's interest
- Where to go for information on job opportunities in your field
- How to present your qualifications to the best advantage in a job interview

Marketing Your Job Skills offers tips on planning your time, taking tests and profiting from job interviews.

Self-Appraisal

The first step in marketing yourself is to determine your skills. You need a detailed inventory of your background and experience so that you will know exactly what assets you have to offer an employer.

No matter what type of position you seek, your inventory will be a basic tool in your search. If you are marketing your skills for a professional or office position, the inventory will help you prepare your resume. If you are looking for work in a skilled trade or other field in which resumes are not expected, your inventory will help you decide how to present your skills and experience in a job interview.

To prepare your self-inventory, follow the outline below. Write down all the data you think might help you in your job search. Later, you can weed out the list and select the assets that are relevant to the position you seek.

Work History

List all of your work, including part-time, summer and freelance work. For each job, give the name and address of the employer, your job title, the details of your duties and the dates you were employed. Then ask yourself:

- What did I like about each job? Why?
- What did I dislike about each job? Why?
- Why did I leave?

Skills and Abilities

Ask yourself: What personal qualities do I have that make me good at certain types of work? Think back over your job experience, school and volunteer activities and try to be honest with yourself. Some examples of skills and abilities include: initiating, imagining, leading, organizing, following orders and working well with others. Which of your skills can be transferred to another position (for example, operation of a machine or office equipment or blueprint reading)?

Education

List the academic schools you attended, with dates, principal courses you took and the degrees you received.

Then list any business, vocational, military, on-the-job training or special courses you took, with dates and any certificates you received.

Then ask yourself:

- What courses or training did I like best and why?
- What courses or training did I dislike and why?

Now list your scholarships or honors and your extracurricular activities.

If you are a recent graduate, your non-credit activities may constitute a significant part of your job qualifications (for example, work on the school newspaper or campus radio station). Even if they are not directly related to a job, they may help you identify your best talents and interests. For example, do you enjoy sports, recreation and outdoor activities? Did you excel on the debate team? Are you good at organizing a group to do a job?

Interests, Skills and Aptitudes

Ask yourself: What are my hobbies or volunteer activities? What are my special talents or aptitudes? For example, can I fix a car, play a musical instrument or speak another language? Am I good at drawing or painting? What do I learn most easily? How can I relate my talents and interests to a job?

- Does my physical condition limit me in any way?
- Is it necessary for me to change my field of work?
- How long can I afford to be out of work?

Career Goal

What kind of work do I want to do five or 10 years from now? What kind of position should I seek now in order to prepare for my goal?

Jobs I Want

Considering all the information in your inventory, list the types of jobs you feel you are best qualified for and want. List them in order of preference. If you have completed your inventory, you are ready for the next step – either preparing your resume or selecting your sources of job information. Perhaps you have considered all the factors in your background and still are not ready to answer the key question: What kind of position do I want? You may be just out of school or military service. Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) offices and Illinois workNet Centers located throughout the state have staff available to assist you. You may have decided that you are on the wrong track vocationally and want to switch to a new field. Perhaps you have been out of the labor force for years because of family responsibilities.

You can learn more about different types of occupations – the wages paid, the working environment, the education required and general descriptions of the duties and skills involved - through the Illinois Career Resource Network Web site www.ilworkinfo.com/icrn.htm or by going into the IDES office nearest you.

Once you have decided on your job goal, IDES can give you other assistance, such as introducing you to www.IllinoisJobLink.com, our internet-based job search tool that features current job openings. Illinois JobLink searches for open jobs by job category. Both statewide and nationwide job banks are included. You can set up searches so that you are notified when a position is posted that matches your search criteria.

Preparing a Resume



If you are seeking a professional, technical, administrative or managerial job, you will need a resume. A resume is also a useful tool when applying for clerical, sales and blue collar occupations. An effective resume “gets your foot in the door” and often leads to personal interviews.

Your self-inventory should contain all the information you need to prepare your resume. You now have to select, arrange and organize this raw material in the way that best relates your background to the job you seek.

Your first task is to select from your inventory the data you want to use. Ask yourself: *Which parts of my training and experience are relevant to my job goal? Which parts, if any, are unrelated?* Give full pertinent details on how your former or current positions relate to your present goal. On the other hand, be brief in listing jobs unrelated to your goals.

Unrelated jobs will be of little interest to a prospective employer. Next, you must arrange the information you have selected. To attract an employer’s attention, plan to list your best qualifications early in your resume. Ask yourself: *Is my work experience or my education the most important part of my resume?*

You can organize your experience in one of two ways - by job or by function. You may want to look over the suggested outline and sample resumes in this booklet before you decide which one presents your work experience better.

Your resume should be detailed enough to give an employer the information needed to assess your qualifications. At the same time, it should be concise. A busy employer wants the pertinent facts in as few words as possible. For example, in your work history, the full sentence, “I was responsible for analyzing the cost sheets from the production department,” can be condensed into a short phrase starting with an action verb: “Analyzed production cost sheets.”

If you have more than one job objective, you have two alternatives:

1. **You can list, in order of preference, the jobs for which you are qualified.** Your resume should include all data relevant to each job. This will give you one all-purpose resume. It has the clear advantages of simplicity and speed. You can prepare in advance as many copies as you think you will need and have one ready to pass out whenever you want it.
2. **You can prepare a resume directed specifically to each job objective.** You will need a basic resume to use as a guide. Before applying for a particular job, you can prepare a resume that presents your background in a way that would most likely interest the employer. This, of course, takes more time and effort.

You may decide it is worth the extra trouble:

- If your job goals are in separate fields (for example, research assistant, copywriter or English teacher.)
- If you will approach several types of institutions that may place more value on different aspects of your background. (For example, one may emphasize certain academic degrees, another is interested in a particular part of your job experience and still another may be looking for clues to your personal traits, such as the ability to persuade or deal tactfully with others).

The details do make a difference. Your resume should be typed. If you can't type it yourself, having a copy typed is a good investment. Software is available to assist you in developing your resume. IDES offices and Illinois workNet Centers have computers and software available for your use. It is also a good idea to have someone proofread your copy. If errors such as misspellings and improper grammar are overlooked, these mistakes can give an employer a negative first impression of you. Errors on resumes may cause the potential employer to wonder if you would be as careless on the job.

You may need anywhere from a few to 200 copies depending on the type of job you seek, the supply and demand in your field and the geographic area you wish to cover.

Duplicating costs are nominal and your resume can be reproduced economically. Have it printed on 20-pound weight paper. If possible, have matching letterhead sheets printed for cover letters and purchase matching envelopes. If you want detailed information or assistance in preparing resumes, contact your local IDES office or Illinois workNet Center.

Resumes created on the Internet: Electronic resumes highlight a worker's skills and experience using a different style, where key phrases replace sentence structure.

Suggested Outline for Your Resume

Personal Data

Begin with your name, address and telephone number. Other personal data, such as date of birth, marital status and dependents, should be omitted from your resume. Employers could use this information to eliminate you from a job. An employer may view your marital status as a negative (the employer may feel married individuals are not free to travel or that single persons are unstable).

Employment Objective

Indicate the kind of job you are seeking. If you are qualified for several jobs and are preparing one all-purpose resume, list them in order of your preference.

Work History

You can organize this information in two ways. Choose the one that presents your work experience better.

1. By Job

List each job separately (even if the jobs were within the same firm), starting with the most recent one. For each job, list:

- Dates of employment
- Name and address of employer and nature of the business
- Position you held

Then describe your job including:

- Specific job skills - The tasks you performed, including any special assignments, and use of special instruments or equipment
- Scope of responsibility - Your place in the organization, how many people you supervised and, in turn, the degree of supervision you received
- Accomplishments - If possible, give concrete facts and figures

2. By Function

List the functions (fields of specialization or types of work, such as engineering, sales promotion or personnel management) you performed that are related to your current job objectives. Then briefly describe the work you have done in each of these fields without breaking it down by jobs.

Education

(If this is your main selling point, put it before your work history.) List your formal education:

- High school (can be omitted if you have a higher degree, college, graduate school and other courses of training)
- Degrees or certificates received (it's best to not include the date you received your degree on your resume if you are concerned about age discrimination)
- Major and minor subjects and other courses related to your job goal
- Scholarships and honors
- Extracurricular activities (if you are a recent graduate and your activities pertain to your job goal)

Military Experience

List your military service only if it is recent or pertinent to your job goal, indicating:

- Branch and length of service
- Major duties, including details of assignments related to the job you seek (indicate pertinent military training here or under your education)

Miscellaneous

Only if appropriate to your field of work, give such information as:

- Knowledge of foreign languages
- Volunteer or leisure-time activities
- Special skills, such as typing, shorthand or ability to operate special equipment
- Memberships in professional organizations
- Articles published, inventions or patents

References

“References upon request” or names of individuals serving as your references do not belong on a resume. This information has its own special place on a job application form. (Note: Always obtain the permission of the people you use as references.)

The following examples show some of the ways that a job seeker can organize a resume. They are for use only as general guides:

Jane Smith
6214 North Mills Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60609
(312) 555-5555

MANAGEMENT

Directed operations of five branch offices. Formulated and implemented administrative policies. Designed, organized and monitored marketing strategies resulting in 50% overall increase in sales in one year. Prepared in-depth reports on monthly, quarterly and annual basis. Analyzed comparative merchandise.

SALES

Sold personal and industrial-sized computer systems and obtained six new major accounts in two months. Supervised and trained staff of eight salespeople. This force was identified as the top producing sales group in region. Developed and delivered sales technique training package to regional managers.

MECHANICAL

Repaired and maintained all mechanical and electrical aspects of home computer system. Developed detailed preventive maintenance, guidelines and maintenance schedules.

WORK HISTORY

1993-Present IBM Inc., Chicago, Illinois - Area sales manager
1981-1993 Motorola, Schaumburg, Illinois - Systems engineer and electrician

EDUCATION

Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois
Master's in Business Administration

Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago, Ill.
Bachelor of Science, Systems Engineering

Resume Samples

Jim Doe
5050 South State Street
Chicago, Illinois 60600
(312) 555-5555

WORK EXPERIENCE

1990 – Present **Sears Roebuck & Company**, Chicago, Illinois

Administrative Secretary

- Analyze and resolve operational problems
- Plan and coordinate conferences and events
- Read and answer correspondence
- Supervise 10 personnel
- Compile and maintain records
- Screen incoming calls for unit members
- Prepare time sheets for processing by payroll unit

1988 – 1990 **Illinois Department of Public Aid**, Chicago, Illinois

Stenographer

- Reviewed incoming correspondence, distributed to appropriate staff members
- Transcribed case information for official records
- Compiled monthly case count report for management

1987 – 1988 Various part-time jobs, including memory-mag-card operator, receptionist, reading tutor

Skills

- Excel Software
- WordPerfect Suite
- Windows

EDUCATION

Speed writing, typing, secretarial procedures certificate (Taylor Business Institute, Chicago, Illinois), general business major (Wendell Phillips High School, Chicago, Illinois)

John Doe
147 North Wood Street
Clarendon Hills, Illinois 60557
(312) 555-5555

Employment Objective: Human Resources Developer

Skills

- Adhere to EEO and ADA guidelines
- Administer employee evaluation system
- Check employment references
- Consult with management to determine training needs
- Coordinate grievance procedures
- Conduct orientation for new employees
- Recruit, interview, recommend and select applicants for job openings
- Organize and submit annual, quarterly and monthly reports
- Represent management in preparation of collective bargaining agreements

Achievements

- Directed interviews and hiring of incoming personnel
- Served as management representative during union meetings and grievance hearings
- Updated and administered OSHA regulations for compliance and corrective action where appropriate
- Researched and monitored EEO and affirmative action program standards
- Supervised and maintained employee benefits and insurance plans
- Conducted annual personnel performance reviews

Work History

1991 – Data System, Inc., Oak Brook, Illinois
Personnel assistant and benefits coordinator
1985 – 1991 Allied Engineering, Inc., Chicago, Illinois
Administrative Assistant

Education

Wisconsin State University, LaCrosse
Bachelor of Arts, Psychology

Cover Letters

A resume must always be sent with a cover letter tailored to the job for which you are applying.

The following guidelines may help you with your cover letter:

- Type neatly, using care in sentence structure, spelling and punctuation.
- Use the same grade of paper used for your resume.
- Address your letter to a specific person if possible (use city directories or other sources).
- State exactly the kind of position you are seeking and why you are applying to the particular firm.
- Be clear, brief and businesslike.
- Enclose a resume.
- Indicate that you will call for an appointment.

Cover letters will vary considerably depending on the circumstances. Here is one sample:

(Date)

Mr. Robert Wilson, President
Metallic Manufacturing Company
3893 Factory Boulevard
Cleveland, Ohio 60200

Dear Mr. Wilson:

Recently I learned, through Dr. Robert H. Roberts of Atlantic and Pacific University, of the expansion of your company's sales operations and your plans to create a new position of sales director. If this position is open, I would appreciate your considering me for the job.

Beginning with over-the-counter sales and order service, I have had progressively more responsible and diverse experience in merchandising products similar to yours. In recent years I have carried out a variety of sales promotion and top management assignments.

I am enclosing a resume of my qualifications for your review. I will telephone you in a few days to arrange for an appointment to discuss my application further.

Very truly yours,
John W. Doe
Enclosure

Planning Your Time



Even if you are under no economic pressure to find a job quickly, starting your search promptly is a wise policy. Delaying may hurt your chances of finding the job you want. If you have just finished school, for example, you are competing for similar positions with other new graduates in your field. Moreover, a long delay between school or your last job and your application for work may give an employer the impression that his office is one of your last stops in a long and fruitless job search.

Once you start your search, you should treat it as a full-time job. Looking for work can become discouraging at times, but sustained effort usually pays off.

The following suggestions may help you plan your time for an efficient job search:

- Plan and start your search as soon as you know you will need to find a new job.
- Make your job hunt a full-time project. You work a 40-hour week for your employer; you should work no less for yourself.
- Once you start your search, do not allow yourself little vacations.
- Apply early enough in the day to allow time for multiple interviews, tests or other hiring procedures that may be required.
- Plan to arrive 10 minutes early for appointments.
- Before approaching a firm, try to learn the best time and day of the week to apply for a job.
- Follow up on leads immediately. If you learn of a job opening late in the day, call the firm to arrange an appointment the next day. The employer may postpone a hiring decision until then.

Sources for Job Information

Looking for your first job, or making a job change? Below are resources and tips that can enhance your job search:

1. Networking

When you first begin your job search, tell EVERYONE you know. You can network through friends, school placement services, job clubs, job fairs, churches, past business acquaintances, etc.

2. Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES)

IDES provides online job matching services and a variety of career information on the Web. IDES also provides employment services for specialized groups and offers one-on-one assistance to people who need help using its services. Find out more about IDES services online at www.ides.illinois.gov.

Web site for Finding Jobs

- **Illinois JobLink (www.IllinoisJobLink.com)**: Illinois JobLink is a unique Internet job search tool that features current job openings. Illinois JobLink searches for open jobs by job category. Both statewide and nationwide job banks are included.

Web site for Researching Careers

- **Illinois Career Resource Network (www.ilworkinfo.com/icrn.htm)**: Use this online resource to learn about careers that relate to your interests and abilities. Find out about the outlook, wages and educational requirements for occupations. Learn about scholarships and training programs offered at colleges and vocational schools. For more information, call **1-866-663-7723**.

Other IDES Employment Services

- Specialized employment services for veterans, the formerly incarcerated and at-risk youth
- Recruitment services at national conventions and job fairs
- Tax credits available for certain targeted groups of individuals
- Job seekers can access the following services, at no cost, at IDES workNet Centers:
 - » Resume writing assistance
 - » Internal resources
 - » Seminars on interviewing techniques, job hunting and job retention
 - » Businesses and educational resources
 - » Labor market information
 - » Telephone, copy and fax machines, which are available at most centers for little or no charge

To locate a nearby IDES office, call 1-888-367-4382.

3. Illinois workNet (www.illinoisworknet.com)

Provides job listings and links to employment resources. Helps with resume development and skills analysis. Provides labor market, career and job training information.

4. Industrial and Craft Unions

- Have exclusive hiring authority for some firms
- Each deals with a limited number of occupations

5. State and Federal Job Openings

Jobs are filled through a merit-based system as determined by the results of examinations and ratings of experience and education. To learn about state job openings, log on to: <http://www.work.illinois.gov> or call 312-793-3565. To learn about federal job openings, log on to: www.usajobs.opm.gov or call 703-724-1850.

6. Private Employment Agencies

- Usually specialize in a few occupations
- Some charge applicants a fee for registration or placement; others collect fees from employers

7. Yellow Pages, Industrial Directories, and Chambers of Commerce

Provide names of firms that employ workers in your field.

8. Professional Associations

- Useful for specialized occupations
- Listings available at libraries

9. School or College Placement Services

- A productive source for professional openings
- Usually only available to students and alumni of the school
- Good source for networking

10. Company Web sites and Online Job Boards

11. Classified Advertisements in Newspapers, Professional Journals and Trade Magazines

The Job Interview

The Job Interview

A job interview is your showcase for merchandising your job skills. During the interview an employer judges your qualifications, appearance and general fitness for the job opening. It is your opportunity to convince the employer that you can make a real contribution.

Equally important, it gives you a chance to assess the job, the employer and the firm. It enables you to decide if the job meets your career needs and interests and whether you want to work for the employer.

Before each interview, though, you should assume that the job you are applying for is precisely the one you want - because it may be. To present your qualifications most effectively, you will need to prepare in advance. You should have the needed papers ready and the necessary information about yourself firmly in mind. And you should know how to act at the interview to make it an effective device for selling your skills.

Preparing for the interview:

- Assemble all the papers you need to take with you. Bring a few copies of your resume to the interview, even if you sent a resume beforehand. You may also need a driver's license, union card or military records. If appropriate, bring work samples, such as art, design work or published writing.
- Learn all you can about the company that is interviewing you – its product or service, standing in the industry, hiring policies and practices.
- Know what you have to offer (i.e. education, training, work experience).
- Know what kind of job you want and why you want to work for the firm.
- Be prepared to furnish the names, addresses and business affiliations of three references (not relatives). If you are a recent graduate, you can list your teachers. Always ask your references for permission to use their names.
- Learn the area salary scale for the type of job you are seeking. This information can be found on the Web at www.ilworkinfo.com/icrn.htm.
- Never take anyone with you to the interview.
- Allow as much uninterrupted time for the interview as required. (For example, do not park your car in a limited time space.)
- Dress conservatively. Avoid either too formal or too casual attire.



You and the interview:

- Be pleasant and friendly but businesslike.
- Let the employer control the interview. Your answers should be frank and brief but complete, without rambling. Avoid dogmatic statements.
- Be flexible and willing, but give the employer a clear idea of your job preferences.
- Stress your qualifications without exaggeration. The employer's questions or statements will indicate the type of person wanted.
- If you have not submitted your resume in advance, present it or your work records, references, personal data, work samples or other materials to support your statements when the employer requests them.
- In discussing your previous jobs and work situations, avoid criticizing former employers or fellow workers.
- Don't discuss your personal, domestic or financial problems.
- Don't be in a hurry to ask questions unless the employer invites them. But don't be afraid to ask what you need to know. If the employer offers you a job, be sure you understand exactly what your duties will be. You should also find out what opportunities for advancement will be open to you. A definite understanding about the nature of your job will avoid future disappointment for either you or your employer.
- Be prepared to state the salary you want but not until the employer has introduced the subject. Be realistic in discussing salary.
- If the employer does not definitely offer you a job or indicate when you will hear about it, ask when you may call to learn the decision.
- If the employer asks you to call or return for another interview, make a written note of the time, date and place.
- Thank the employer for the interview. If the firm cannot use you, ask about other employers who may need a person with your qualifications.

After the Interview

Make each interview a learning experience. After it is over, ask yourself these questions:

- How did the interview go?
 - What points did I make that seemed to interest the employer?
 - Did I present my qualifications well? Did I overlook any that are pertinent to the job?
 - Did I pass up clues to the best way to “sell” myself?
 - Did I learn all I need to know about the job or did I forget or hesitate to ask about factors that are important to me?
 - Did I talk too much? Too little?
 - Was I too tense?
 - Was I too aggressive? Not aggressive enough?
 - How can I improve my next interview?
 - Did the interview seem to go well? Are you really interested in the position?
- If so, follow-up with a Thank You note to the interviewer; it may be just enough to tip the scale in your favor.

Testing

Many firms require a psychological test or a series of such tests as part of the application procedure. The tests most commonly used are those that indicate intelligence or general aptitude. In addition, some firms use tests that give them information on specific aptitudes, personality traits and interest patterns.

If you are a recent school graduate, you are probably accustomed to taking tests. But if you have been out of school for some years, you may be apprehensive about the testing process. You may fear that your test scores will not reflect your real ability to do a job. Don't let tests intimidate you. None of the commonly used tests require advance preparation; you need not feel concerned by not having “crammed” the night before. And bear in mind that your scores are only one among the many factors the employer will consider in judging your job qualifications.

Many tests have time limits. You will be told how much time you will have. Listen carefully to the instructions you receive. If you do not clearly understand what you are expected to do, be sure to ask questions. The time for questions, however, is before the test begins. If the test is timed, seconds lost in asking questions after it starts could seriously affect your score. After you start the test, work steadily and carefully. In taking most tests, you should not spend too much time on any one question; instead, come back to difficult or time-consuming ones after you have completed the others.

Once the test is over, do not reproach yourself for not doing better. If their test is well constructed, you probably would make a similar score if you took it again. Remember, too, that employers do not regard your score as an infallible measure of your abilities - but as only one indication of them.

Accessing the Illinois Department of Employment Security



The Illinois Department of Employment Security's services are offered in more than 50 offices throughout Illinois. To find the location of the center nearest you, call 1-888-367-4382. TDD: 312/793-3184.

Or, log on to:

Illinois Department of Employment Security
www.ides.illinois.gov

Illinois JobLink
www.IllinoisJobLink.com

Illinois Career Resource Network
www.ilworkinfo.com/icrn.htm

Illinois workNet
www.illinoisworknet.com

Note: The information contained in this publication is subject to change at any time. For the latest information, visit the IDES Web site at www.ides.illinois.gov.

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